

Message Text

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ACTION AF-10

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FOR AF/EPS/EDWIN SEGALL

ALSO PASS AF/W

E.O. 11652: N/A
TAGS: EAID, DM
SUBJ: SPECIAL SELF-HELP FUNDS FY-77: BENIN

REF: STATE 90477

1. WE APPRECIATE YOUR RECOGNITION THAT HOST GOVERNMENT DELAYS ARE MAJOR FACTOR IN SLOWING OBLIGATION OF FISCAL YEAR 1977 SELF-HELP FUNDS. IN BENIN'S CASE THE ROUTE THROUGH THE GOVERNMENTAL HIERARCHY IS EXTREMELY SLOW AND TORTOUS. ANY INDIVIDUAL ACTIVITY AGREEMENT EXCEEDING DOLS 200 OR APPROXIMATELY 50,000 CFA MUST RECEIVE CLEARANCE FROM CONCERNED MINISTRY (E.G. PRIMARY EDUCATION) WHICH IN TURN MUST COORDINATE WITH MINISTRY OF INTERIOR BEFORE ANY ACTION CAN BE CONSIDERED. ACTUAL REQUEST MUST BE IN FORM OF DIPLOMATIC NOTE FROM MIN OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS BEFORE IAA CAN BE SIGNED. THIS PROCESS IN A COUNTRY WHERE AN ALREADY LUMBERING BUREAUCRACY HAS BEEN FURTHER HOBbled BY A TENSE SECURITY SITUATION CAN TAKE MONTHS.

2. THE SELF HELP PROGRAM IS OF PARTICULAR IMPORTANCE IN BENIN SINCE IT IS BEST MEANS OF PROJECTING CONSTRUCTIVE ROLE OF LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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US AND CONTRIBUTION IT CAN MAKE, DESPITE THE OFFICIAL ANTI-US POSITION OF THE KEREKOU GOVERNMENT. WE OFTEN GAIN AS MUCH, IF NOT MORE, RECOGNITION FROM HELPING A DISTRICT CENTER WITH DOLS 2500 TO BUILD A SCHOOL THAN WE DO FROM THE 10.6 MILLION DOLLAR COTONOU BRIDGE/DAM PROJECT. WHILE WE CANNOT AFFORD TO BUILD A SERIES OF BRIDGES WE CAN CERTAINLY DO A GREAT DEAL TO HELP IN THE HEALTH AND EDUCATION FIELDS FOR NOMINAL SUMS

OF MONEY. ANOTHER CONSIDERATION IS THAT THE LOCATION OF SELF-HELP PROJECTS THROUGHOUT THE COUNTRY GIVES US A VALUABLE MEANS OF ARGUING AGAINST BENINESE TRAVEL RESTRICTIONS ON DIPLOMATS.

3. IN VIEW OF THE SPECIAL IMPORTANCE OF SELF-HELP PROJECTS IN BENIN, WE REQUEST DEPARTMENT DEFER CONSIDERATION OF REALLOCATION OF BENIN'S SELF-HELP FUNDS UNTIL WE HAVE HAD FULL OPPORTUNITY TO COORDINATE WITH TECHNICAL MINISTRIES AND LOCAL PROJECT MANAGERS TO OBTAIN A GOOD IDEA OF THE TOTAL VALUE OF REQUESTS WHICH WE CAN EXPECT FROM THE FOREIGN MINISTRY. WHILE WE UNDERSTAND THE MANAGEMENT CONSTRAINTS UPON DEPARTMENT WHEN FUNDS APPEAR TO BE LYING IDLE, WE WOULD NOT LIKE TO LOSE AN ESSENTIAL ELEMENT IN OUR LIMITED POLITICO-ECONOMIC INFLUENCE IN BENIN SIMPLY AS A RESULT OF BEING UNABLE TO RECONCILE THE INHERENT SLOWNESS OF THE BENINESE BUREAUCRACY WITH OUR OWN DESIRE TO ENSURE THAT FUNDS ARE SPENT PROMPTLY. WE WOULD HOPE THAT A COMPROMISE COULD BE FOUND.
THOMPSON

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